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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/26/2017
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [CVIS](#) [MO](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: AMB. MEETING WITH FM BENAISSA ON CONSULATE GENERAL
SECURITY

Classified By: Amb. Thomas T. Riley for reason 1.4(g)

¶1. (S) Summary and comment: Meeting with Amb. Riley April 27, FM Benaissa had no new information on prospects for GOM action to close two lanes of traffic in front of Consulate General Casablanca to create necessary security setback. Benaissa said Moroccan police services are working to effectively counter the terrorist threat, that the terrorists are not connected to a foreign network, are "geographically limited," and that the population is firmly opposed to their acts. Benaissa's threat assessment appeared to be positive spin and was at odds with information developed through ongoing law enforcement liaison. End summary and comment.

¶2. (C) Ambassador Riley met with FM Benaissa at the Ambassador's request on the morning of April 27 to discuss the security needs of the Consulate General in Casablanca. The Ambassador commented that we had learned from the Wali of Casablanca on Wednesday evening that the Wilaya had submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Interior related to our request for closure of the traffic lanes immediately in front of the Consulate General. We had not heard anything further from the Interior Ministry, but hoped for a positive answer that would enable us to resume consular operations. The Ambassador noted that our concern is centered on defending against the possibility of a vehicle-borne explosive device. Our consular operations are located too close to the street to provide sufficient protection. The Ambassador said that we would be unable to resume consular operations without greater setback from traffic. We want to resume operations as soon as possible, the Ambassador emphasized, because the Moroccan public, including students and businessmen, are being adversely affected by the closure. He emphasized that there is no short-term alternative to the existing Consulate General facility for visa operations.

¶3. (C) Benaissa said that the GOM is equally concerned about the situation. He said that the GOM will provide whatever security measures it can. The acknowledged that the initial response from the Interior Minister had been that closing the street was impossible, however, and he had no new information from the MOI.

¶4. (C) Benaissa agreed with the Ambassador that the population is strongly opposed to the terrorist acts. He said that already he is seeing "fewer beards in the streets," as Moroccans are at pains to disassociate themselves from extremist symbols. He said that Moroccan citizens are practicing vigilance, flooding police with reports of suspicious activities. Pointing to Interior Minister Benmoussa's April 26 briefing to parliament, Benaissa said that the terrorist acts appeared to be "a very local operation, not related to what we see elsewhere," and that the terrorists are limited geographically. He believed security forces were doing a good job and that the situation

would be quickly brought under control. Benaissa also said that the government had called for a "dialogue with these people" to develop a better understanding of their grievances and how they could be sorted out.

15. (S) Comment: Benaissa's view of the Moroccan terrorists as somehow geographically confined is at odds with our understanding of the threat based on liaison with Moroccan law enforcement. This is the first we have heard of a GOM call for dialogue, a matter we will explore further. However, our immediate assessment is that he was caught up in spin and that this was a reference to the GOM's broad efforts to counter radicalization and extremism rather than a reference to a specific initiative. End Comment.

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